

with a raise in the minimum wage, he would see that the average American minimum wage earner would benefit to the tune of about \$36 per week by an increase from \$4.15 to \$5.25 per hour. That's about \$1,872 a year. Now I ask you, what American in their right mind would prefer \$27 and a reduction in funding for education to \$1,872 a year. As the young people say these days, "I don't think so."

A proposed rebate by repeal of \$27 per year wouldn't even be a drop in the bucket to most Republicans, pocket change to those who usually avoid any comparison with the average American unless it is an election year. Even as an election year ploy, the Gingrich-Army Republicans ought to be able to do better than \$27 a year. But to suggest that even that pittance be offset on the backs of children takes GINGRICH to grinch in a fast minute.

Mr. Speaker, our educational system is already in danger of running out of gas because of all the cuts that the Gingrich-Army Republicans have already shoved down the throats of the kids on the playgrounds, parents, and the members of school boards across America. We need to increase Federal support to education, not reduce it.

The Gingrich-Army Republicans want our educational system to run out of gas in the middle of the superhighway. Once again, the Gingrich-Army Republicans have shown that they are completely out of touch with the American people.

HONORING THE LANCASTER VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 1996

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I am taking this opportunity to applaud the invaluable services provided by the Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department. These brave, civic-minded people give freely of their time so that we may all feel safer at night.

Few realize the depth of training and hard work that goes into being a volunteer firefighter. To quote one of my local volunteers, "These firemen must have an overwhelming desire to do for others while expecting nothing in return."

Preparation includes twice monthly training programs in which they have live drills, study the latest videos featuring the latest in fire-fighting tactics, as well as attend seminars where they can obtain the knowledge they need to save lives. Within a year of becoming a volunteer firefighter, most attend the Tennessee Fire Training School in Murfreesboro where they undergo further intensified training.

When the residents of my district go to bed at night, they know that should disaster strike and their home catch fire, well-trained and qualified volunteer fire departments are ready and willing to give so graciously and generously of themselves. This peace of mind should not be taken for granted.

By selflessly giving of themselves, they ensure a safer future for us all. We owe these volunteer fire departments a debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

H.R. 3413, COMMUTER RAIL SAFETY ACT OF 1996

HON. WILLIAM J. MARTINI

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 1996

Mr. MARTINI. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation that will improve working conditions for train employees, while improving safety for rail commuters.

On the morning of February 9, 1996, hundreds of New Jersey commuters experienced the worst commuter rail accident in the history of New Jersey Transit. The accident claimed the lives of 3 people—including 2 train engineers—and injured 162 others. In combination with other safety factors, the accident was possibly a result of operator fatigue because one of the train engineers was working a split shift on very little sleep.

On a split shift, a train employee may work up to 12 hours, provided that employee is given a continuous rest period of at least 4 hours. The operator of one of the trains involved in the New Jersey Transit accident reported to work at 6 p.m. Thursday evening and operated trains until 1 a.m. Friday morning. He had a rest period from 1 a.m. to 5:40 a.m., when he resumed operating trains until 8:40 a.m.—the time of the accident. Several of New Jersey Transit's train engineers at the time of the accident regularly worked split shifts, often splitting a late evening shift and an early morning shift.

While there is no way to know whether or not operator fatigue, due to what is known as a "split shift", played a major role in the New Jersey Transit collision that occurred in February, one thing is certain—the split shift was not sound policy.

In response to the deadly New Jersey Transit train crash, I am introducing the Commuter Rail Safety Act of 1996. This legislation addresses the suspected cause of the tragic February accident—operator fatigue. As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which oversees our Nation's railroads, I feel it is my obligation to take additional measures to ensure the safety of train employees and commuters.

Under the Commuter Rail Safety Act, commuter train operators will no longer be forced to work risky shifts whereby they work several hours in a late night shift, take a 4-hour break, and then begin working an early morning shift. This provision addresses the problem of diminished alertness during morning hours that results from having been on duty during the nighttime. Furthermore, by doing away with overnight duty on commuter trains, my legislation eliminates the problem of employees not having an adequate place for rest in the middle of the night. In many instances, an employee working an evening/morning split shift is forced to sleep in a chair, in a noisy train station, or in an unoccupied railcar.

This legislation still allows split shifts that begin the initial tour of duty in the morning, 4 to 8 a.m., for such shifts do not interfere with an individual's natural sleep cycle—circadian rhythm.

The second provision in the Commuter Rail Safety Act is to provide train employees with 8 hours notice of their next job, with the only exception being shorter notice in the event of an emergency.

Currently, a train employee might be given anywhere between 1 and 3 hours' notice to report for duty. We feel that this practice fosters fatigue due to the resulting irregular and unpredictable work schedules. By allowing 8 hours' notice, this bill gives employees more preparation time for duty—preparation time to rest!

Third, this bill provides train employees with 8 hours of undisturbed rest, with the only exception being the 8-hour notice for duty.

While most rail carriers currently provide 8 hours of so-called undisturbed rest, many see no problem in calling an employee during this rest period. Daily interruptions experienced by train employees, including constant phone calls updating employees of their next job or asking them to fill in for industry's scheduling mistakes, are unnecessary and create undue stress on those employees. It is critical that all train personnel who are responsible for the safety of hundreds of commuters each day be adequately rested.

Last, this legislation establishes criminal consequences for any rail employer or employee who intentionally fails to report rail accidents or injuries to the appropriate Federal and State authorities. In fact, it goes so far as to prevent an employer from discharging or discriminating against an employee who properly reports such an event. This provision prevents coverups of safety violations on the part of employer and employee and is a critical part of this safety legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Commuter Rail Safety Act has one focus—safety for train employees and commuters. It is my hope that, with the Commuter Rail Safety Act, we will be able to prevent tragic accidents, such as the NJ Transit collision, from happening in the future. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE JOSEPH AND MICKEY WAPNER

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

HON. ANTHONY C. BEILSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 1996

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I are honored to pay tribute to our good friends Judge Joseph and Mickey Wapner, who this year are being recognized by the Brandeis-Bardin Institute for their significant contribution to Jewish life. We can think of few couples who together have been so involved for so long in Democratic Party politics and Jewish community activities as have the Wapners. Allow us to share a few examples.

Beginning in the 1960's, Mickey established a pattern of total devotion to the causes and people in whom she believed. In 1960 she was speakers bureau coordinator for the John Kennedy for President campaign; from 1967 to 1970 she was west coast director of public relations for the American Jewish Committee; from 1966 to 1968 she was a member of the California Commission on the Status of Women. In 1970 Mickey was named assistant